COMM 502: Theoretical Approaches to Multidisciplinary Design Projects

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Office Hours: By Appointment

Time:
Location:

I. Course description

The purpose of this course is to examine and apply theories and present research in Communication and the Social Sciences to individuals interested in bridging disciplines in order to produce a proposal, business plan, publication, or a research project. Particular emphasis is placed on applying theory to understand human communication and behavior, both in face-to-face and digital contexts. Students are introduced to individual, group, and network level theoretical frameworks. See the Daily Schedule below for more specific details.

II. Learning Objectives

Expected learning outcomes for students are listed below.

- *Knowledge and Application of Theory*
    - Accurately explain theories of communication how these theories impact communication outcomes.
    - Use communication theory to analyze case studies for a new perspective on problem solving.
- *Analytical Thinking:*
    - Develop theoretically-grounded improvements to existing communication processes, products, platforms or campaigns.
    - Conduct a literature review that synthesizes research from a variety of sources.
    - Apply communication theories to design a feasible and executable cross-disciplinary research project or business proposal of the student's choosing
- *Information Literacy:*
    - Conduct academic research using a variety of library resources.
    - Develop the ability to communicate effectively across disciplines in order to achieve team goals and deadlines.

III. Assignments & Assessment

Application Assignments (15%)

Throughout the semester you will complete a total of two application assignments (5% each). For these assignments you must pick an example from the popular press that pertains to the readings and topics for the current week. This assignment is about **application,** and it is not a summary. At most, you should spend a paragraph summarizing ideas. The bulk of your assignment should be devoted to analysis of the example and application of course concepts. Your assignment should demonstrate that you are critically engaging with the material and providing your own take on it. Length should not exceed 500 words. You must include references to course materials and any outside materials you cite. You must also include two discussion questions for the class. References and discussion questions are not included in the word count.

Note: Your assignment is due by **11:59PM the Monday before your selected date**, in order to ensure that your classmates have time to read and comment on your assignment. Submissions posted after this time will be counted as late and points will be deducted.

A limited number of people can select each week. You can find the link to the sign-up sheet on Blackboard.

You will post your assignment to the course blog. Keep in mind that while this is a "blog post", it is not a rambling personal reflection. You should still have a logical structure to your post. This is a graduate program and you should be honing your writing skills. Grammatical and spelling errors are distracting. Look out for them.

In preparation for each week you are expected to come class having read all of the application assignments for that week and ready to discuss. So, even in the weeks when you are not submitting you are still expected to be contributing. Lack of preparation for application assignment discussions will impact your course participation grade. *Additionally, you must post substantive comments on at least 5 classmates' submissions throughout the course of the semester. These comments comprise the final 5% of the application assignment category*.

Midterm Literature Review (25%)
For the Midterm Literature Review you will review relevant academic literature on a topic of your choosing.   Refer to the Midterm Literature Review Guidelines for a more detailed description of the expectations for this assignment.

Final Project & Presentation (35%)
The final project for this course is a group effort and consists of developing a proposal for a new business or product, a proposal for a research project, or a state of the art review of the literature and case study analysis. The final deliverable

consists of a written report along with a presentation in the final class period. Refer to the Final Project & Presentation Guidelines for a more detailed description of the expectations for this assignment.

Class Participation (15%)
This is a seminar-style class. I will be lecturing each week, but there will also be a large discussion component of each class meeting. Therefore, class participation is essential. We will spend time discussing the readings and working through case studies that relate to the theories and concepts we are covering each week. You will be expected to come to class prepared, having read the assigned readings, with questions/comments prepared on those readings, and with case questions or application examples when requested. _There will be occasional reading pop quizzes on the readings._ If you want to ensure you receive a high participation grade, you should volunteer your thoughts, ideas and responses verbally in class each week. This demonstrates both your engagement and your preparation. (It also makes class more interesting for everyone!)

IV. Grading Breakdown

Assignment	% of Grade
Applicant Assignments	15
Midterm Literature Review	30
Final Project & Presentation	45
Class Participation	10
TOTAL	100

VI. Late Policy
Application assignments will be accepted up to 24 hours late (with a penalty). Submissions more than 24 hours late will not be accepted.

The penalty for the midterm and final project assignments is 1 letter grade per day.

VII. Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Deci, E. (1996). *Why we do what we do: Understanding self motivation.* New York, NY: Penguin Books.

Rogers, E. (2003). *Diffusion of Innovations.* New York, NY: Free Press.

Sloman, S., & Fernbach, P. (2017). *The knowledge illusion: Why we never think alone*. Riverhead Books: New York, NY.

Each week you will be reading some combination of book chapters, journal articles, case studies, and popular press articles. All readings will be posted on Blackboard.

VIII. Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

Important note: *Be advised that this syllabus is subject to change – and probably will change – based on the progress of the class and/or guest speaker availability.*

Refer to Blackboard for Weekly Assigned Readings.

	Topics	Deliverables
Module 1: The Individual		
Week 1 8/22/18	Course Introduction	
Week 2 8/29/18	Cognition	
Week 3 9/5/18	Motivation	
Week 4 9/12/18	Emotion	Midterm Lit Review Topic Selection
Week 5 9/19/18	Identity and Reputation	
Module 2: Interpersonal & Group Dynamics		
Week 6 9/26/18	Group Cognition	
Week 7 10/3/18	Midterm Presentations	Midterm Literature Review
Week 8 10/10/18	Group Emotion & Group Identity	
Week 9 10/17/18	Culture	Final Project Topic Selection
Module 3: Dynamics of Networks and Collectives		
Week 10 10/24/18	Theories of Social Networks: Part I	
Week 11 10/31/18	Theories of Social Networks: Part II	
Week 12 11/7/18	Diffusion & Virality	
Week 13 11/14/18	Ethics in the Age of Big Data	

Week 14 11/21/18	Finals Workshop Week (No Class- Thanksgiving Holiday)	
Week 15 11/28/18	Final Presentations	Final Presentation
Final Exams		Final Project

VIII. Policies and Procedures

A. Plagiarism

Statement on Academic Integrity
USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. Please see the *SCampus* (http://scampus.usc.edu/1300-academic-integrity-review/) for the university's Student Conduct Code.
USC School of Communication Policy on Academic Integrity
The following is the USC Annenberg School of Communication's policy on academic integrity and repeated in the syllabus for every course in the school:
USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. *SCampus*, the Student Guidebook, (www.usc.edu/scampus or http://scampus.usc.edu) contains the University Student Conduct Code (see University Governance, Section 11.00), while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A.
All academic integrity violations will be reported to the office of Student Judicial Affairs & Community Standards (SJACS), as per university policy, as well as Communication school administrators.
In addition, it is assumed that the work you submit for this course is work you have produced entirely by yourself, and has not been previously produced by you for submission in another course or Learning Lab, without approval of the instructor.

B. Statement for Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Website and contact information for DSP: http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html, (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 740-6948 (TDD only), (213) 740-8216 (FAX) ability@usc.edu.

D. Technology Policy

During students will <u>not</u> be allowed to use laptops, mobile phones, or wireless connections unless instructed to do so for in-class activities. Unless permitted by the instructor, cell phones also be turned off during class.

To understand the reasons for this policy, you may reference the following materials:
- "Why you should take notes by hand – not on a laptop"
- "The Myth of Multitasking"
- "The Case for Banning Laptops in the Classroom"
- "How (and Why) to Stop Multitasking"

E. Stress Management
Students are under a lot of pressure. If you start to feel overwhelmed, it is important that you reach out for help. A good place to start is the USC Student Counseling Services office at 213-740-7711. The service is confidential, and there is no charge.

F. Sexual Assault Resource Center
The Center for Women & Men and the Sexual Assault Resource Center are one and the same. Student Counseling Services is a separate place that also offers confidential counseling and support groups on a variety of other topics. To schedule an appointment with Student Counseling Services, call (213) 740-7711 between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. weekdays or visit the Engemann Student Health Center on the University Park Campus.

G. Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis
In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies.